



State News

The League of Women Voters of New York State

November 2011

Electronic Voters Guide: Vote 411

In addition to the usual candidate forms and printed voter guides, leagues across the state have taken a new path this year to engaging voters by creating online voter guides through the League's Vote 411 website. Participating leagues include Albany County, Broome/Tioga Counties, Buffalo/Niagara, the Hamptons, Huntington, New York City, Rensselaer County, Rochester Metro Area, Saratoga County, Schenectady County, Wayne County, and the Westchester County ILO.

These leagues took advantage of the voter guide system of www.VOTE411.org to post information about the candidates running for office and ballot issues. The www.Vote411.org website covered 535 races in New York State and 1032 candidates. New York voters represented 27% of the nationwide visitors to the Vote 411 website. There were over 12,000 New York visitors to the Vote 411 site in the past year, and they came from 488 cities around the state.

Kudos and thanks to Chris Alexander and Francine Rodger, both of the Saratoga County League, who spearheaded the committee that made this possible.

Redistricting

Local leagues have continued to give testimony at LATFOR hearings around the state, and participated in other forums on redistricting issues. We are the only group that has had a presence throughout the state. The Governor has pledged to veto any district lines drawn by LATFOR but expectations are dwindling for a major structural change from LATFOR to an independent commission for 2012. The League remains committed to a long-term constitutional solution.

Hydrofracking

Several public meetings are being held around the state by the Department of Environmental Conservation on the High-Volume Hydraulic Fracturing draft SGEIS. The state league plans to submit written comments. For a full list of the hearings scheduled, go to:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/78246.html>

2012 Legislative Agenda

Based on the responses we had from local leagues with suggestions for the 2012 legislative agenda, and consideration of both resources and legislative opportunities for the next year, the Board adopted the following as the League's 2012 Legislative Agenda.

Steps To A Better New York #Election Reform

Improve election processes to extend, encourage and protect voting, including paperless and Election Day registration, better ballot design, improved polling place management/ poll worker training, and measures to ensure the integrity of all ballots

Campaign Finance Reform

Support lower contribution limits, increased disclosure and public financing. Support stronger and effective campaign finance enforcement with increased civil and criminal penalties for violations.

Other Government Positions

Support structural reform to legislative redistricting; support effective ethics enforcement and open and transparent government processes; monitor impact of the property tax cap on localities and schools.

Health Care

Support affordable and effective health care for all New Yorkers.

Natural Resources

Support protection and management of New York's natural resources in the public interest.

Other League Positions

The League also has positions on the Judiciary, State Finances, and Social Policy under which we can and do take action.

Tax Caps and Circuit Breakers

LWVNYS President Betsey Swan recently presented *Tax Caps in New York State: Meaningful Relief or Snare and Delusion?* at a conference. The conference was organized to discuss strategies for the 2012 legislative session on property tax relief and reform. See the power point presentation and media coverage on the state League website.

Lobby Day

We will be organizing a Lobby Day in Albany in late January, similar to the one we held in February last year. All League members interested in our advocacy work, here in Albany or locally, are invited to attend. We will discuss what our positions are, how we derive at those positions, and what action we are taking on those positions. We will also provide a tour of the Capitol and arrange for meetings with state legislators if people are interested. So, watch for more information and a date for 2012 Lobby Day. Email the state League office if you'd like to receive the info and attend.

Advocacy Issues

Go to the state League website (www.lwvny.org) for important updates from our Issue Specialists in Elections, Transportation and Court Restructuring in the November State Voter.

Voter Participation Project

How can our voter registration process and voting methods be improved to increase voter participation? What are other states doing? How does early voting or vote by mail work? Can the design of the ballot and poll worker training be improved to simplify voting and encourage more to vote? These and other questions are answered in the Increasing Voter Participation program that the State League is finalizing this month. Ask your League if it is organizing a community forum with the materials provided - or offer to help organize a forum. Education of our members and the public will be important for our advocacy efforts for reform on these issues.

1919 Society

Don't forget to include the state League in your will - and join the 1919 Society. If you already have included the League in your will, just let us know and we'll add you to the members of the Society. As a member, their names will be engraved on a plaque in the state League office, listed in the *State Voter*, and on the website.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NYS

62 Grand Street, Albany, NY 12207-1403

(518) 465-4162; Fax (518) 465-0812

Web Address: www.lwvny.org

E-mail: lwvny@lwvny.org